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ABSTRACT

The effects of gender and family role on college students' perception of the suitability or unsuitability of specific occupational choices were examined. Undergraduate college students (132 males and 136 females) completed a questionnaire asking them to rate on a 5-point Likert scale the suitability of 60 selected occupations for either men, women, mothers, or fathers. The 60 occupations were drawn from Holland's 6 occupational scales, with 10 occupations randomly selected from each of the 6 groups. On the realistic and enterprising occupational scales, mean suitability ratings were significantly higher for men compared to women, for men compared to mothers, and for fathers compared to mothers. On the investigative occupational scale, mean suitability scores were significantly higher for fathers compared to mothers. On the artistic occupational scale, mean suitability scores were higher for women compared to men. On the social occupational scale, mean suitability scores were higher for men compared to women, for men compared to mothers, and for fathers compared to mothers. Both men and women college students appeared to be similarly influenced by the stimulus categories of men, women, fathers, and mothers. (The questionnaire is appended.) (MN)

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The Influence of Gender and Family Role on Perceptions of Suitability of Occupational Choice

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Abstract

This study explored how gender and family role influenced the perception of college students regarding the suitability or unsuitability of an occupational choice. The focus of the study was based on career development theory which suggests that perceived career options or societal structure of opportunity shapes or limits career choice to a range of appropriately sex-typed alternatives (Astin, 1984; Gottfredson, 1981). The study focused on how male and female undergraduate college students rated the suitability of selected occupations for men, women, mother and fathers.

Two-hundred-sixty eight (268) undergraduate college students (132 males; 136 females) completed the Occupational Choice Suitability Questionnaire indicating their opinions about the suitability of selected occupations for either men, women, mothers, or fathers. The OCSQ consisted of a random selection of 60 occupations - with 10 occupations drawn from each of Holland's six occupational scales - which were rated on a 5 point Likert scale from 1 (highly unsuitable) to 5 (high suitable). Research questions addressed the differences between male and female respondents' occupational suitability ratings for each stimulus category (male, female, mother, father); differences in occupational suitability ratings between the 4 stimulus categories; and differences in occupational suitability ratings related to the interaction of respondent gender and stimulus category.

The main effect of stimulus category was significant at the .01 level on five of the six occupational scales. Neither the main effect of respondent gender nor the interaction effect of respondent gender and stimulus category was significant. The Scheffe Post Hoc comparisons revealed 10 significant comparisons at the .01 level. Seven (7) of the 10 significant comparisons involved the occupational scale suitability ratings for the stimulus category of "mother" as being significantly lower than other occupational scale suitability ratings for the stimulus categories of "man" and "father."

It appears that both men and women college students tend to perceive occupational choices for a mother at significantly lower levels of suitability than those reported for men and fathers -- although the mean ratings for the category of mother were in the 2.97 to 3.31 range which was identified as "neutral" on the Likert scale. Suitability ratings are more likely to be higher for occupations on four of the six occupational scales when associated with men or fathers.

Procedure

A sixty (60) item Occupational Choice Suitability Questionnaire (OCSQ) was developed by the researcher (Appendix A). It consisted of a random selection of 60 occupations with ten occupations drawn from each of Holland's six occupational scales (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional). Each occupation was then rated on a 5 point Likert scale - 1 = highly unsuitable; 2 = somewhat unsuitable; 3 = neutral; 4 = somewhat more suitable; 5 = highly suitable. Four different versions of the OCSQ were administered. Each version included the same occupations but the directions differed by asking respondents to indicate their personal opinions about the suitability of each occupation for either a man, a woman, a father or a mother. Thus each respondent received a questionnaire asking for suitability ratings of occupations for one of the stimulus categories of men, women, father or mother.

The Occupational Choice Suitability Questionnaire was administered to a sample of 136 women and 132 men college students currently enrolled in psychology courses at a medium sized private college in a city in the Northeastern United States. Average age of women students was 20.6 years. Average age of men students was 20.8 years. The respondents each received a questionnaire directing them to rate the

suitability of occupations for either men, women, mothers or fathers depending on the form they were randomly assigned.

Means and standard deviations for suitability ratings of occupational scales for each of the four stimulus categories (men, women, fathers, mothers) as rated by male and female college student respondents were calculated. A 2 x 4 Anova design was implemented followed by Scheffe Post Hoc comparisons to determine which stimulus categories were different.

Results

Scores were derived from the OCSQ to assess the mean suitability scores on each of the six Holland Occupational Scales (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional) for the stimulus categories of Men, Women, Mothers, Fathers as rated by men and women college students. (See Table 1)

In order to determine differences an Anova was done for each scale. A 2 x 4 Anova design was implemented to determine the significance of the main effects of respondent gender, stimulus group, and the interaction effects of respondent gender and stimulus group. The main effect of stimulus group was significant at the .01 level for occupational scale categories of Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social and Enterprising. Neither the main effect of respondent gender or the interaction effect of respondent gender and stimulus group was significant. (See Table 2)

In order to determine which stimulus groups were different, Scheffe Post Hoc Comparisons were made. Since respondent gender was not significant, mean suitability scores for the total respondent group were used. Ten significant comparisons at the .01 level were identified. (See Table 3)

*On the realistic occupation scale, mean suitability ratings were significantly higher for men compared to women, for men compared to mothers and for fathers compared to mothers.

*On the investigative occupational scale, mean suitability scores were significantly higher for fathers compared to mothers.

*On the artistic occupational scale, mean suitability scores were higher for women compared to men.

*On the social occupational scale, mean suitability scores were higher for men compared to mothers; and for fathers compared to mothers.

*On the enterprising occupational scale, mean suitability scores were higher for men compared to women; for men compared to mother; and for fathers compared to mothers.

*Of the ten significant comparisons, 7 involved the stimulus category of mother receiving significantly lower suitability ratings compared to men (3) and fathers (4).

*There were no significant differences on occupational scale suitability ratings between stimulus categories of men and father.

*There were no significant differences on occupational scale suitability ratings between stimulus categories of women and fathers.

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*There were no significant differences on occupational scale suitability ratings between stimulus categories of women and mothers.

*Of the ten significant comparisons, 9 involved the stimulus category of either men (5) or father (4) receiving significantly higher suitability ratings compared to women (2) or mothers (7).

*Of the ten significant comparisons, only one (artistic) involved the stimulus category of women receiving a significantly higher occupational scale suitability rating compared to men.

Conclusion

1. Both men and women college students appear to be similarly influenced by the stimulus categories of men, women, fathers and mothers in that their occupational scale suitability ratings show no significant differences in relationship to respondent gender.

2. For the total group of respondents, the male category appears to positively influence occupational scale suitability ratings with greater frequency than other stimulus categories.

3. For the total group of respondents, the family role category of father appears to positively influence occupational scale suitability rating compared to the family role category of mother.

4. Both the male category and the father category are more likely to positively influence occupational scale suitability scores than the woman or mother categories.

5. For the total group of respondents, the family role category of mother appears to negatively influence occupational scale suitability ratings with greater frequency than other stimulus categories.

6. Findings in this study support career development theory which suggests that career choice is shaped toward a range of appropriately sex-typed alternatives. When respondents give their opinions about suitability of occupational choice, they are influenced by whether the occupation is chosen by a man, woman, father or mother. Occupational choices on four occupational scales when thought to be made by men or fathers are more likely to receive higher suitability ratings. Occupational choices when thought to be made by a mother are more likely to receive lower suitability ratings.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Suitability of Occupations for Stimulus Categories as Perceived by Male and Female Students.

Occupational Scale	Stimulus Category	Respondent Gender Male (N=132)		Female (N=136)		Marginal (N=268)
		M	SD	M	SD	M
Realistic	Man	3.86	.82	3.90	.49	3.88
	Woman	2.97	.86	3.29	.69	3.12
	Father	3.58	.55	3.51	.76	3.54
	Mother	2.82	.50	3.14	.70	2.97
Investigative	Man	3.53	.82	3.68	.57	3.60
	Woman	3.57	.79	3.72	.72	3.64
	Father	3.78	.81	3.81	.77	3.80
	Mother	3.18	.71	3.45	.72	3.31
Artistic	Man	3.21	.78	3.21	.65	3.21
	Woman	3.84	.76	3.90	.58	3.87
	Father	3.44	.71	3.46	.76	3.46
	Mother	3.28	.67	3.75	.71	3.50
Social	Man	3.84	.78	3.75	.56	3.80
	Woman	3.27	.86	3.74	.68	3.49
	Father	3.86	.60	3.81	.73	3.83
	Mother	3.02	.71	3.54	.65	3.26
Enterprising	Man	3.77	.85	3.78	.67	3.77
	Woman	3.22	.83	3.40	.68	3.30
	Father	3.70	.58	3.63	.74	3.65
	Mother	2.96	.67	3.36	.76	3.15
Conventional	Man	3.48	.82	3.41	.70	3.44
	Woman	3.44	.79	3.60	.63	3.51
	Father	3.61	.74	3.45	.78	3.50
	Mother	3.05	.58	3.47	.70	3.25

* Stimulus Group/Number of Male to Female respondents
Men/38 males; 35 females
Women/36 males; 32 females
Father/14 males; 35 females
Mother/39 males; 34 females

Table 2
Summary of Anovas for Occupational Scales

Occupational Scales	F Respondent Gender	F Stimulus Category	F Interaction of Respondent Gender X Stimulus Category
Realistic	3.17	25.45*	1.25
Investigative	2.67	4.70*	0.24
Artistic	2.43	10.34*	1.77
Social	5.93	9.03*	3.56
Enterprising	1.98	10.49*	1.29
Conventional	0.90	1.98	2.0

Table 3

Significant ($p<.01$) Scheffe Post Hoc Comparisons for Main Effect of Stimulus Category

Occupational Scale	M/W	M/F	M/Mo	W/F	W/Mo	F/Mo
Realistic	M>W		M>Mo			F>Mo
Investigative						F>Mo
Artistic	W>M					
Social			M>Mo			F>Mo
Enterprising	M>W		M>Mo			F>Mo

M = Man
W = Woman
F = Father
Mo = Mother

References

Astin, Helen S., (1984). The meaning of work in women's lives: A sociopsychological model of career choice and work behavior. The Counseling Psychologist, 12:4, 117-126.

Gofffredson, L.S. (1981). Circumscription and compromise: A developmental theory of occupational aspirations. Journal of Counseling Psychology Monograph, 28: 545-79.

Appendix A

Occupational Choice Suitability Questionnaire

RESPONDENT'S DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

AGE:

GENDER: male female

RACE: african-american: native american: hispanic: asian: caucasian: other.

MARITAL STATUS: single: married: divorced

NUMBER OF CHILDREN:

AGES OF CHILDREN:

DIRECTIONS

Below is a list of sixty (60 randomly selected occupations. We are interested in your personal opinion about how suitable a choice each of these occupations would be for (man, woman, mother, father). Please mark the scale next to each occupation to indicate your opinion. The scale ranges from 1 (highly unsuitable) to 5 (highly suitable). An example is indicated below. REMEMBER. WE WANT TO SURVEY YOUR PERSONAL OPINION ABOUT THE SUITABILITY OF SELECTED OCCUPATIONAL CHOICES FOR A (MAN, WOMAN, MOTHER FATHER).

1 highly unsuitable	2 somewhat unsuitable	3 neutral	4 somewhat more suitable	5 highly suitable

Economist	1	2	3	4	5
Golf Club Manager	1	2	3	4	5
Fund Raiser	1	2	3	4	5
Data Entry Operator	1	2	3	4	5
Helicopter Pilot	1	2	3	4	5
Technical Publication Editor	1	2	3	4	5
Lobbyist	1	2	3	4	5
Anthropologist	1	2	3	4	5
Plumber	1	2	3	4	5
Interior Designer	1	2	3	4	5
Physical Therapy Aide	1	2	3	4	5
Word Processing Supervisor	1	2	3	4	5
Speech Teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Orthodontic Technician	1	2	3	4	5
Structural Drafter	1	2	3	4	5
Electric Meter Installer	1	2	3	4	5
Landscape Architect	1	2	3	4	5
Purchasing Agent	1	2	3	4	5
Industrial Arts Teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Nurse Anesthetist	1	2	3	4	5
Detective	1	2	3	4	5

Night Auditor	1	2	3	4	5
Paintings Restorer	1	2	3	4	5
Hotel Clerk	1	2	3	4	5
Production Assistant	1	2	3	4	5
Insurance Sales Agent	1	2	3	4	5
Superintendent of Schools	1	2	3	4	5
Cake Decorator	1	2	3	4	5
Safety Inspector	1	2	3	4	5
President, Financial Institution	1	2	3	4	5
Veterinary Livestock Inspector	1	2	3	4	5
Commercial Artist	1	2	3	4	5
Tractor Trailer Driver	1	2	3	4	5
Dermatologist	1	2	3	4	5
Maintenance Scheduler	1	2	3	4	5
Fabric Inspector	1	2	3	4	5
Animal Trainer	1	2	3	4	5
Respiratory Therapist	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor, Insect and Disease Inspection	1	2	3	4	5
Personnel Clerk	1	2	3	4	5
Border Guard	1	2	3	4	5
Stage Director	1	2	3	4	5
Airport Maintenance Chief	1	2	3	4	5
Information System Programmer	1	2	3	4	5
Dean of Students	1	2	3	4	5
Radiological Technologist	1	2	3	4	5
Photojournalist	1	2	3	4	5
Botanist	1	2	3	4	5
Director of Institutional Research	1	2	3	4	5
Building Inspector	1	2	3	4	5
Recruiter	1	2	3	4	5
Package Designer	1	2	3	4	5
Mining Engineer	1	2	3	4	5

Claim Adjuster	1	2	3	4	5
Artist's Model	1	2	3	4	5
Bibliographer	1	2	3	4	5
Civil Engineer	1	2	3	4	5
Jeweler	1	2	3	4	5
Athletic Trainer	1	2	3	4	5
Time Study Analyst	1	2	3	4	5